

Matheson says volunteers are vital — particularly to firefighting in Utah



By Mandy Jean Woods
Deseret News correspondent

SPRINGVILLE — If community service volunteers in Utah were to be paid for their efforts, the state budget for its employees would have to be doubled.

"In 1978, during my first year in office, an intern did a survey on voluntarism in Utah. He excluded all religious voluntarism and found that the number of hours volunteers put in was equal to the amount of money we pay all of our state employees — which, by the way, is about \$1 million per day," said former Gov. Scott M. Matheson.

He was the keynote speaker at the opening meeting of the Utah State Fireman's Convention, which will continue through Saturday in Springville.

Matheson commended the volunteer firefighters, saying, "We could not maintain the integrity of protecting our property without the volunteers."

The state's unique geographical divisions, with 84 percent of the population along the Wasatch Front and 16 percent spread throughout rural areas, requires a unique partnership, he said.

"That solution is volunteer firefighters working with paid firefighters jointly and cooperatively."

Matheson said voluntarism is a vital part of the democratic system.

"The democratic process under which we live is the theory behind the government process. Thomas Jefferson believed we each have an obligation as

part of our membership in this society, to perform public service.

"There is lots of commitment in Utah. Voluntarism is growing by 10 percent a year," he said. "The volunteer firefighters are equal in responsibility to the full-time employees. What we have is a special relationship one to another and to our system and to our communities. That's the kind of glue that will keep us together," he said.

He praised firefighters for the excellent and prompt way they handled a recent fire in Salt Lake City that demolished part of a city block.

Matheson twice received standing ovations from the audience.

Norvel "Nick" Estep, chief of the Tremonton Fire Department and outgoing president of the Utah State Firemen's Association, said the number of volunteer firefighters far exceeds the number of full-time firefighters.

"All the volunteers get out of their service is the satisfaction of helping save lives and property," he said. "The pay is very little."

Of the 81 fire departments in Utah, more than 60 percent are represented at among the 700 attending the convention, said Estep.

"I commend you for your devotion to duty and appreciate the many hours of service you provide the communities throughout the state," wrote Sen. Jake Garn, R-Utah, in a letter that was read at the meeting.

Utah County

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s suggested by David B. Magleby, an associate at Brigham Young University and spokesman for the county. He said that if the old plan is followed, a lawsuit challenging the environmental impact statement.

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trucking. He said a four-lane highway is unsafe and putting a barrier between the lanes cuts off access to recreation areas.

Provo Mayor Joe Jenkins and Orem Mayor Blaine Willes said the present road is unacceptable, but they are concerned about the safety of the proposed UDOT plan. Willes suggested the governor get some outside experts to review the plan and agreed to go along with whatever the outside group suggests.

Willes said he has confidence in UDOT employees, but because they are so closely involved with the project maybe they aren't willing to make some changes.

Bangerter is faced with making a quick decision because bids on the project are expected to be submitted June 15.

Utah County Commission Stan Leavitt favored the new UDOT proposal and doesn't want any more study because the Provo Canyon road issue has been studied for nearly 20 years.

In answer to a question about placing a sign in the canyon encouraging interstate trucks to use I-80 and Parleys Canyon instead of Provo Canyon, Donald S. Coleman, assistant Utah attorney general, said trucks constitute only 12 percent of the canyon traffic.

Without researching the issue, Coleman believes it would amount to discrimination to force certain trucks to bypass the canyon.

Janice Reeb, representing Citizens for a Safe and Scenic Canyon, said the four-lane concept was not properly addressed in the EIS. Unless truck traffic can be scaled back, she favors the two-lane highway with only 30 percent passing lanes.

Beyond the controversial section of the highway, the UDOT plan calls for maintaining an improved two-lane highway through the narrows essentially on the same alignment. From Wildwood to Heber City, UDOT

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